

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Business Subjects

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Scoil Na Tríonóide Naofa
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Doon Co Limerick
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	68121S

Date of Inspection: 28-09-2017



WHAT IS A SUBJECT INSPECTION?

Subject Inspections report on the quality of work in individual curriculum areas within a school. They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of the subject in the school.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspector evaluated learning and teaching in business subjects under the following headings:

1. Teaching, learning and assessment
2. Subject provision and whole-school support
3. Planning and preparation

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision in each area.

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Dates of inspection	27-09-2017 and 28-09-2017
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and key staff• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during six class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Scoil na Tríonóide Naofa is a co-educational secondary school with a current enrolment of 597 students. Business Studies is a core subject in first year and an optional subject thereafter. Business education is compulsory in the optional Transition Year (TY) Programme. Accounting and Business are offered to Leaving Certificate students.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from very good to fair.
- In lessons where highly effective teaching was observed, the very good structure and pace of lessons ensured that students were actively engaged in their learning, attained good business knowledge and developed key skills.
- Where assessment for learning (AfL) strategies were being effectively implemented, they had a positive impact on student learning.
- Whole school support and subject provision for business education is very good.
- The quality of planning for business education is satisfactory; there is scope to develop a collaborative approach to subject department planning.

Recommendations

- Teaching and learning practices such as effective lesson planning, the provision of opportunities for students to lead their own learning, effective student co-operative learning activities and the use of information and communications technology (ICT) as a learning tool should be used in all lessons, where appropriate.
- AfL strategies that include reviewing of learning intentions and provision of written formative feedback to students should be further developed by teachers.
- The content of the business subjects' plan and each subject's curricular plan should be developed collaboratively as a guide for the provision of the best possible business education for students that includes the teaching and learning improvement targets as identified through the *School Self Evaluation (SSE)* process.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from very good to fair. There was considerable variation between the highest standard of teaching observed which included elements of exemplary practice and pedagogical practice that required improvement.
- In lessons where very good practice was observed, a good blend of suitable teaching methodologies such as co-operative learning strategies, use of high quality electronic visual resources and differentiated tasks were used to meet the learning needs of students.
- Most lessons were well planned. Learning intentions were shared with students at the outset of most lessons. Very good practice was observed in one lesson where the learning intentions were mapped to the learning outcome and unit of work for the specification. At the conclusion of a small number of lessons, students verbalised what they had learned in the lesson. These good practices should be expanded to all lessons.
- The development of students' literacy skills was well supported by clear explanations of unfamiliar terminology and keywords in most lessons. In one lesson, students worked on a lengthy teacher-generated worksheet that contained spelling and grammar errors. Therefore, it is advisable that teachers proof read all materials prepared for students. In a small number of lessons, good mental arithmetic strategies were used to encourage students to make calculations; this could be encouraged further.
- Where required, teachers gave very good individual support and guidance to students in an affirming manner. Classroom management was good in all lessons. In almost all lessons, students displayed a positive approach to class work, while in some lessons, students were confident to ask questions.
- In almost all lessons, students were fully engaged as a result of the teaching methodologies used. The high levels of motivation displayed in some lessons were achieved through the use of a good balance of teacher and student activities. In a few lessons, teacher talk predominated, students had little student involvement or opportunities to lead their own learning. In these lessons, teaching methodologies that actively involve students in the learning of the lesson are recommended.
- In the majority of lessons, students had good opportunities to work in pairs or small groups. In one lesson, students engaged in a highly effective group task that was differentiated to suit learners' abilities and allowed for meaningful and productive student exchanges. In this lesson, students had a clear understanding of their individual and collective roles and responsibilities associated with the task. The use of everyday exemplars enhanced the activity. In another lesson, a group activity lacked good coherent planning; the assignment on which students worked would have been more suited to a pair task.
- In some class groups, students' digital literacy skills were enhanced through activities such as researching of information and preparation and presentation of material. In many junior cycle lessons, students' key skills were developed through project work and oral presentation to peers. This is good practice.
- The operation and management of the school shop and participation in mini-company projects and business-related outings provides participating students with very good opportunities to engage in experiential learning. It is applauded that these opportunities are open to all students of business education in the school.

- Some class groups received varied modes of homework such as research of subject content and project work. This good practice should be further developed by all teachers.
- In some lessons, students' work was returned with affirming and formative comments. In a small number of lessons, students corrected each other's work using set criteria. These good practices should be further expanded.
- The uptake of business subjects at higher level is good as are the subsequent outcomes in certificate examinations. Teachers review students' attainment in certificate examinations against national norms. It is advised that student attainment should also be reviewed using base-line assessment data available in the school and that a narrative on students' achievement be noted in planning documentation.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Whole school support and subject provision for business education is very good. Management's support of co-curricular and extra-curricular related activities helps to foster a culture in which learning in business education flourishes.
- The sampling of Business Studies by first-year students for the full year provides all students with some financial literacy skills and facilitates the making of a well-informed decision on subject choices. Student uptake of business subjects is good.
- Senior management encourages teachers to develop and extend their teaching, learning and assessment practices. In so doing, it has provided relevant whole-school teaching and learning-related continuing professional development (CPD), including input on differentiation strategies and teaching methodologies. Teachers in the business department should further embed relevant strategies, such as the use of active learning methodologies, as promoted through whole-school CPD into their pedagogical practice.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of planning for business education is satisfactory. While the approach to planning for individual business subjects by teachers is good, there is scope to further develop a stronger collaborative approach to subject department planning.
- At the regular business subject department meetings, discussions pertaining to some classroom practice such as the development of students' key skills are sometimes on the agenda. It is advisable that the agenda for meetings should include a stronger emphasis on the discussion of teaching methodologies and student learning strategies.
- The curricular plans for Business and Accounting are well developed. Planning for Business Studies requires development. All business teachers should collaboratively and incrementally plan for the delivery of the new Business Studies specification in the classroom.
- The school self-evaluation (SSE) numeracy and literacy improvement targets were not included in subject planning documentation. It is advisable that the SSE targets be included in planning documentation and that business teachers agree on common strategies to progress them purposefully in business education.
- In some teacher-based classrooms, there were good examples of student-generated and visual learning resources on display. The potential to further develop and in some instances create a visual learning environment for business students should be further exploited.
- The business department, as part of its review of business education in the school, has compiled a list of developmental priorities. To progress these priorities, an implementation

plan should be collaboratively agreed using action-focused planning principles with success and review criteria.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

THE INSPECTORATE'S QUALITY CONTINUUM

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the of quality the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	Very good applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is outstanding and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary
Good	Good applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a <i>very good</i> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	Satisfactory applies where the quality of provision is adequate. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas
Fair	Fair applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Weak	Weak applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-school action is required to address the areas of concern. In some cases, the intervention of other agencies may be required to support improvements.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management acknowledges the report and welcomes its recommendations.

Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

The Business Studies Department will work through the recommendations laid out in the report. It plans to focus on its subject plan firstly with acknowledgment of the other recommendations within the plan.

The Board of Management will review regularly the progress in relation to the recommendations made.